

BLACKFRIARS

UNREAL TOWERS

He has as many mouths as minds
And his hands are twice as many.
Watch him pass, lift up your blinds
And throw him down a penny.

Our prime is past ; we are a withered field
That waits a late November harvester.
Our own minds murder us, our own souls choke
Our souls.

Husbandman, the field is oversown.
Husbandman, from our death deliver us.
An enemy has done this thing ; we lay
All evening by the watchfires sleepily
Listening.

The old campaigners and the tales they told!
Memory ! memory ! we have lived too long.

Gatherer, going to the field alone
To bind your sheaves beneath a winter moon,
Wake us with coffee when the work is done.

See, a stone city on the mud of Thames
Where a stone city sunk an age ago
On a stone city.
The ground floor stands upon the lower-ground,
Our vaults converse with Rome, our piles are sunk
In trinkets of the Carthaginian.

And look here, after Sodom I said I was sorry.
It won't occur again I said if you can see your way
To pass it over this time I'll make a fresh start.
Well I say there was no call for it at all.
We don't mind having a God I said
I'm not an atheist if that's what you mean:
But leave a chap to think what he likes, this is a free country.

Oh, but it was easy, Marcellinus !
God sharpened the lions' teeth, one blow
Had sent me nearly senseless, there I lay,
While the great Nero yawned with so much blood,
Thinking how little is one life to lose.
How many souls locked in the arms of Christ
Now bless the fury of this emperor!

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They took him out and scourged him, Pilate thought
It was a bit tough on the Nazarene,
But there was no help for it he could see.

Think at your counter, little Poet, Jew,
Who tell the usury of sentiment,
You also live by a forbidden trade.

Why did you stop laughing so suddenly,
As if seeing your face in the mirror of feeling
That there was someone present unamused?
But why did you stop laughing so suddenly?

I am thinking of Mary, my first wife, who loved me but was a
fool,
And of the little Jewish adultress who married me for my money
When the decree was made absolute and my name was in the
papers.
Well, it's no use fretting about that now.

And Thou, fire-fingered one,
With the sifting of Thy breathings even here
Burn Thou and make us new.

I can see the world is folly, absolute
Folly.
Watching the faces go down Cannon Street
Closed, and the mouths closed, and the eyes
Closed, and closed the minds behind them,
I know not who shall live and who shall die.

If I could hear those negro voices clearly
Walking on golden slippers in my ears—
Golden slippers I've gwine ter wear to walk them golden streets.

To-morrow I may be in Purgatory, Hell or Heaven.
Thank you, kind theologian, thank you, thank you.
I cannot sleep
For the blossom on the apple-trees;
Flower-petal snowfalls flutter and fade and fall.

Let us take stock of our lives:
Bales and bales of tinned tomatoes
And this balance in our books.
What trick have you played there, ledger-clerk?
Ledger-clerk, what trick have you played?

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This on the right was the credit,
This was the credit column,
And there was the invoice and the bills of lading
And the insurance documents.
What shall I do with all this tinned fruit on my hands?
Death and Judgment, Hell and Heaven—
What fools we shall feel in our bowler hats
And all this tinned fruit on our hands.

Look at the Carmelite who hides her hands,
Mary in the gulf of mercy and of judgment,
Mary in the torrent of your tears,
Mary in the unutterable haven of our desires,
Queen **of** the swords of anguish, spare us ;
Virgin of a terrible joy, deliver us ;
Bearer of Christ and his cross, receive us.
Pray for us, most holy Mother of God,
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
Look at this nun alone in her room and tell me,
Tell me, tell me, why does she hide her hands?

Next year, I said to my wife, I told her
We shall go to Cannes for a month or Cap d'Antibes.
It's about time we moved about a hit, I said to her,
And met the people who matter.

Was it not time to know, Marcellinus,
When I, a catechumen under Peter,
To-morrow should have seen the mysteries?
To-morrow snatched me from the lions' jaws
And is to-day for ever.
No words can touch you where I touch your heart.

Why do I, coming to the market-place,
Feel that some other **has** been there before me?
The porters nod towards the auctioneer
As if some other had been there before.

What shall I do? I shall go
And read that book again with much more care
If I can find it after so many years.
I lived in furnished rooms at Kew
And thought a great deal, sitting on the bed,
And tried to pray at night. If I had known
I should have read that book with much more care.
I shall board the bus at Richmond Bridge and say,
'Conductor, take me to Kew ten years ago.'

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If I am to be reckoned by my loss
I am a king's son in a house of slaves.
Paradise, I have lost the title-deeds.
Stand up among the thralls of blood and say,
' I am your king returned from God knows where.'
And they will strike you with each one a hand
That could uproot all Eden like a tree.
Rut do stand up and say,
' I am your king come back to conquer you.'

I gave you a will to do the things that are difficult,
And I that love you, why should I have mercy
As if I could not make you love me more?

I cannot see the need for it at all.
They could have taken him as I take you
Easily by the arm and neatly had him hanged;
But Judas, and the gall poured in the wound—
I cannot see the need for it at all.

This Jew walks out into our drawing-rooms
With his wry neck and calculating eyes
To hide behind our curtains playing spy
Upon the remnant of our loyalties.

There is absolutely nothing before my eyes.
Bride of my youth, I know that you would die
If I should take you suddenly into my arms,
And there would be no child.

I often dream, foolishly,
That with an impatient gesture of my hands,
Half triumph and half wonder, I might brush
The blue and tufted heaven clear away
And beneath milk-curds see the whey of the sky.

How do I know beyond all certainties
That I should find you sweetly face to face,
And know no longer comfort, *only* joy?

This too I know by sordid evidence,
It is more difficult to live than die,
But neither to live nor die is worse than death.

Since there is no flesh living without pain,
Come, let us make *a* faggot of our woes

BLACKFRIARS

And so distil an elixir. I see
Your face is pressing very close to mine,
Judas, and 1 spit between your eyes.

You are so infinitely far away,
Sitting in silence with too many thoughts ;
My hand would smooth your nerve-restricted brows
If you would lift your brow up to my hand.
For many souls as many entrances
Into the self-same parlour of the mind.
Why do you choose the steepest, darkest ways,
Tracing the foothold of an old defeat?
Oh, whisper, these are pasteboard battlements,
And if you fall my arms are here to hold.
Why do you climb the steepest, darkest ways,
The unreal barriers to the City of God?
For there are other ramparts real enough,
And if you fall my arms are here to hold.

This unreal city neither sleeps nor wakes
But rears such turrets as men see in dreams
Unto a thousand nothings of the mind.

Count up your dead gods, London, whore of Thames,
And say how many mutilated Christs
Your mud has spawned into the market-place.

But hard by London Bridge I know a place
Where men within their minds go pace by pace
Upon the moods of suave companionship.

Well, I say, not that we had not known it,
Or dreamed that it could happen any other way—
But how could we take Jesus seriously
After such long acquaintance with ourselves?
If mankind had been worth it, but enough,
Have done with the thought of it.

A further slide in the dollar exchange.
If you think it easy to keep our budget balanced,
Then you are wrong, see?
Now how are we to protect our export trade?

It seems to **me**
That God alone takes these men seriously,
And for this reason I believe in Hell.

UNREAL TOWERS

How disconcerting it will be to find,
Waking, as we are pleased to say, beyond death,
That all this sin is not a dream at all
But sin, as I said, and we
In a boat with sin.
It seems too
That all the waking that we have to do
Had better be done pretty quickly. Well, begin.

Christ crucified
Was not too dainty for the catacombs,
No, nor the brothels neither.
— Certain prerequisites within the soul, **of** course,
These being difficult,
There were whores whose lives were never easy
With difficulty gave them and tears;
Youths also, of gentle nurture,
But it was harder still for these.

Think then, you, hiding in a puzzled brain,
In business and dissensions among friends,
That your impregnable gentility,
Your suave and absolute refusals,
The little lies you stand on to meet the world,
Are in absolute possession of the Enemy
Who leans across the table saying he is your friend.
What do you propose to believe in the matter?
You cannot brush these things away with a gesture.
Is he then enemy or friend?

I will study the psychology of belief,
That will delay decision for a year.
For **I** too have my certainties,
And this is one, **we** talk on equal terms,
That what is asked **I** can at will withhold.

If I have sinned I am sorry.

I bring you joy only, only joy.
If you will only look me in the eyes,
See, I have countered **all** your stratagems.

O, my God, you are an execrable logician, a consummate
dramatist.

And what you say is true ; when I look back
I find there is no way I can descend,
Not even if I fall.

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Have you no gift but darkness, cruel cross?
And you who know how I have longed for rest,
How can you lead such bitter, wakeful ways?
I follow you with nothing but my will
A path too difficult for men to tread.
For I have fallen down a thousand times
As painfully as each had been the last,
And out of pain you give me much more pain,
And out of darkness, darkness absolute;
And still this bend to breaking in the will.

Tremble you unreal towers.

BERNARD KELLY.